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INTRODUCTION

1. In pursuance of the decision taken by the Commission on Sustainable Development at its first session in 1993, Governments and organizations have submitted information and reports at subsequent sessions of the Commission. Guidelines for reporting have been progressively simplified at the request of the Commission. During its third session in 1995, the Commission requested the Secretariat to further streamline and simplify the guidelines for the 1996 session in order to facilitate further exchange of information on national and other relevant experience in implementing Agenda 21; in particular, the streamlining should allow country reports to focus on identifiable achievements and lessons learned. 1/

2. As of 26 February 1996, the secretariat of the Commission had received a total of 24 national reports from the following countries: Austria, Chile, Denmark, Ecuador, Finland, Germany, Guinea, Hungary, Iceland, Mexico, Morocco, the Netherlands, Norway, Peru, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America and Venezuela. The secretariat has also received two reports from the European Commission covering the European Community/Union (hereinafter referred to as the EC report) and another one from the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the Asian Development Bank entitled "State of the environment in Asia and the Pacific". The majority of countries reporting had utilized the Secretariat's guidelines. Hungary submitted a report entitled "Hungary: towards strategy planning for sustainable development" and Guinea submitted a "Provisional environmental action plan". Reports submitted are divided equally between developed and developing countries.

3. The purpose of the present report is twofold. First, it presents in text form summaries of findings on the two sectoral chapters of Agenda 21 2/ under review during the current session of the Commission, namely, chapter 9, entitled "Protection of the atmosphere", and chapter 17, entitled "Protection of the oceans, all kinds of seas, including enclosed and semi-enclosed seas, and coastal areas and the protection, rational use and development of their living resources". Second, it presents in graphic form (see annex) key activities in the two chapters under review. A matrix on key coordination mechanisms at the national level will be available as a background document. It is expected that more reports will be received before the start of the current session of the Commission and the annex will be updated accordingly immediately prior to the commencement of the session.

I. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

A. Cross-sectoral issues

4. The cross-sectoral issues under review are covered in more detail in other reports submitted to the session. The following are therefore some general observations gleaned from national reports. The comments provided by Governments on the suitability of data for decision-making revealed how they saw

their capacity to address the various problems covered under Agenda 21. There were glaring differences between developed and developing countries in terms of the availability and quality of information and data. The United States and most European countries expressed confidence in the quality of the information they already had and, with few exceptions, rated it as very good. At the other extreme, almost all developing country reports reflected the unevenness of available data and information ranging throughout the chapters of Agenda 21.

5. Poverty is not a domestic concern for the developed countries, and they invariably support technical cooperation programmes to alleviate poverty in developing countries. The few developing country reports indicate that poverty continues to be of primary concern; often half of the population is shown as living in poverty and, in some cases, 20 per cent is in extreme poverty. Furthermore, some reports indicate an increase in poverty rates and a deterioration in access to clean water and sanitation.

6. All the developed country reports indicated that Governments and central and local authorities were addressing consumption and production patterns and that awareness-raising was a key element in changing the consumption process. A number of environmental "taxes" have been introduced to encourage energy efficiency and conservation. Ecolabelling is increasingly being used. This will be elaborated on in background documents to be circulated during the current session of the Commission. Most developing country reports indicate that the Governments are aware of the need to address consumption and production issues. Most countries reported that a process had been initiated by the central governmental authorities that also involved local authorities and producers. Most of the actions however appear to be at a very early stage.

B. Chapter 9: protection of the atmosphere

7. Safe use of technologies within industry, transport and energy, as well as environmental impact assessment and research and development within the same areas, is being given high or very high priority by all developed countries. These countries have also addressed quite comprehensively the majority of issues under this chapter. Legislation has been revised, or is in the process of being revised, and all developed countries have agreed to the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer and its amendments and ratified the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. 3/ They also have agreements on transboundary pollution control and have provided information about emissions of carbon dioxide (CO_2), sulphur dioxide (SO_2), oxides of nitrogen (NO_x) and methane (CH_4). While CO_2 emissions continue to increase slowly, or show little or no decline in developed countries, several reports show a decline of more than 5 per cent for SO_2, NO_x and CH_4 since 1990. Reductions in chloro-fluorocarbons (CFC) consumption as agreed under the Montreal Protocol and its amendments are considerable. The EC report also gives very high emphasis to the efficient use of energy within the transport, energy production and industrial sectors. The EC's programmes support the actions of its member States both technically and financially. EC has itself signed and ratified several international agreements.

8. Developing countries place equally high emphasis on the use of safe technologies, environmental impact assessment and research and development; but their limited resources sometimes constrain them and result in their paying less attention to research and development, life-cycle analysis and the transport sector. Upgrading existing industries is often of high priority. As to achievements and improvements made, lack of resources and capacity again clearly separates the developing from the developed. Few developing countries have provided information about emissions of pollutants into the air and several of them do not have adequate capacity to monitor transboundary pollution, nor have they signed any agreements covering this issue.

9. The graphic presentation in the annex provides an indicative and comparative overview of the situation at the national level as reflected in the reports submitted this year.

10. Both the EC and the ESCAP/Asian Development Bank reports provide detailed regional information on the status of the atmosphere, and air pollution and quality. Because of time constraints, it has not been possible to include information on the latter in this report.

C. Chapter 17: protection of the oceans, all kinds of seas, including enclosed and semi-enclosed seas, and coastal areas and the protection, rational use and development of their living resources

11. Eighteen countries and EC have provided information on chapter 17.

12. None of the developed countries report any serious problem areas, although there are indications that control of sewage and other land-based pollution could be improved upon. A few countries do not have integrated management and sustainable development plans for coastal areas as such, but national legislation and national sustainable development strategies or plans appear to cover coastal areas satisfactorily. All the reporting countries list the activities under this chapter as having a very high or high priority. The developing country reports once more reflect the lack of capacity or funding that plagues their ability to address the issues. Three countries do not have national legislation or strategies incorporating issues related to oceans and seas or access to pollution control technologies, and control of sewage and other pollutants is therefore rated often as seriously lacking and sometimes as non-existent. Regular assessment of the coastal and marine environment in developing countries is therefore severely restricted. At least four countries lack contingency plans for human-induced and natural disasters.

13. The EC report also identifies relatively important problems or areas of concern in the Mediterranean, Baltic and North seas. Eutrophication is a problem in the Baltic Sea and the North Sea, and coastal zone pollution is also a problem in the Baltic Sea as well as in the Mediterranean Sea. The ESCAP/ Asian Development Bank report also addresses coastal and marine resources, environmental threats, and policies and programmes for managing coastal areas.

14. EC supports its member States through directives and strategies. Member States tended to refer to the European common fisheries policy as an instrument regulating the fishing industry, not only within the membership, but also in negotiations with non-members. EC also provides funds and technical assistance to developing countries.

II. CONCLUSION

15. Over the past three years, the Secretariat has received reports from 73 Governments and 10 intergovernmental organizations. In addition, 87 countries have provided information on their national coordination contacts. The Secretariat, at the request of the General Assembly, is preparing country profiles for the above countries for the special session of the Assembly to be held in June 1997. These profiles will be submitted to Member States for updating during the second half of 1996. It is hoped that they will form a basis for future monitoring and reporting, since each profile to the extent possible will have been prepared in the same format and will include certain basic statistical data and indicators already commonly collected by, and in use within, the United Nations system. The country profiles will also contain brief summaries reflecting the status of action by each country on all 40 chapters of Agenda 21.

Notes

1/ See Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1995, Supplement No. 12 (E/1995/32), chap. I, para. 108.

2/ Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992, vol. I, Resolutions Adopted by the Conference (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigendum), resolution 1, annex II.

3/ A/AC.237/18 (Part II)/Add.1 and Corr.1, annex I.

ANNEX

STATUS MATRICES OF CHAPTERS 9 & 17 OF AGENDA 21

National priority given by the country for the chapter		Status Indicators	
◆	Very High	↑	Situation favourable and/or improving (can also mean "yes")
♦	High	↔	Indicates possible problems/constraints exist/addressed in part
❖	Medium	↓	Problems/constraints (can also mean "no")
•	Low	?	Not clear from information provided
	No information available/provided	NA	Not applicable/not relevant

The information in these matrices reflects a sampling of data provided by Governments on the situation and/or actions since UNCED. The symbol in the boxes is indicative only - submissions by the Member States should be consulted.

CHAPTER 9: PROTECTION OF THE ATMOSPHERE

NATIONAL PRIORITIES										Country	Responsible institution is part of national level coordination mechanism	Legislation to protect the atmosphere	Montreal protocol and amendments signed	UN FCCC ratified	Monitoring of transboundary pollution	Comparison of transport system with other countries in the region	CO_2 emissions since 1990	SO_2 emissions since 1990	NO_x emissions since 1990	CH_4 emissions since 1990	CFC use since 1990
Safe technologies in industry	Safe technologies in transport	Safe technologies in energy production	EIA within industry	EIA within transport sector	EIA energy production	Life cycle analysis of products	R&D within industry	R&D within transport	R&D within energy production												
◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	Austria	NA	↔	↑	↑	↑	↑	↔	↑	↑		↑
❖	◆	◆	❖	❖	◆	NA		❖	❖	Chile	↑	↔	↑	↑	NA						
❖	◆		◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	Denmark	NA	?	↑	↑	↑	↔	↔	↔	↔	↔	↑
		❖					❖			Ecuador	↑	↓	↑	↔	↓	↓					
◆	◆	◆	❖	◆	◆	❖	◆	◆	◆	Finland	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↔	↓	↑	↑		↑
◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	Germany	↑	↔	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
										Guinea			↑	?							
?	?	◆	?	?	◆	?	?	?	?	Hungary	↑	↔	↑	?	↑	?		?	?		↑
◆	❖	◆	◆	•	◆	•	◆	❖	◆	Iceland	↔	↑	↑	↑	NA	↔	↓	↔	↔	↔	↑
◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	❖	◆	◆	◆	Mexico	↑	↔	↑	↑	↑	↑					
◆			◆							Morocco	↑	↑	↓	↔	↓						
◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	Netherlands	NA	↔	↑	↑	↑	↔	↔	↑	↑	↔	↑
◆	◆	◆	◆	❖	◆	❖	❖	❖	◆	Norway	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↔	↔	↑	↔	↔	↑
◆	•	◆	◆		◆	•	•	❖	◆	Peru	↑		↑	↑	↓						
	◆	◆	❖		❖	NA	❖	•	◆	Slovenia	NA	↔	↑	↑	↔	↔	↔	↑	↔		
❖	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	❖	❖	◆	◆	Sweden	↑	?	↑	↑	↑	↔	↔	↑	↔	↔	↑
	◆		◆	◆	◆				◆	Switzerland	↑	↔		↑	↑			↑	↑		
										Tunisia 1/											
◆	❖	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	Turkey 2/	↑	↓	↑	↓	↓		↓				
◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	❖	❖	❖	Uganda	↑	↔	↑	↑	↓	↔					
•	NA	•	◆	❖	◆	•	❖	❖	◆	Ukraine	NA	↔	↔	↔	↓	↓		↑	↑		↑
◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	NA	United Kingdom	↑	↔	↑	↑	↑	↑	↔	↑	↑	↑	
										United States	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↔	↔	↔	↔	
❖	•	◆	❖	•	◆	•	❖	•	❖	Venezuela	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↓	↔				
◆	◆	◆					◆	◆	◆	E. Community 3/	↑	↑	↑	↑	↓	↔					

1/ No sectoral report
2/ CO_2 emissions for industry only
3/ European Community activities cannot be accurately reflected in this matrix

CHAPTER 17: PROTECTION OF THE OCEANS

National priority for Ch. 17	Country	National plan/ strategy or legislation covering oceans etc.	Plan is part of national SD strategy	Integrated management and SD plans for coastal zones	Relevant community groups involved	Prior environment impact assessment applied	Contingency plans for human induced and natural disasters	National funding situation	National capacity situation	Access to pollution control technologies	Control of sewage related problems	Control of other sources of land based pollution	Code of conduct of reponsible fisheries applied	Regular assessments of the state of coastal and marine environment
NA	Austria													
◆	Chile	↑	↑	↓		↔	↑	↓	↔	↑	↔	↔	↔	↑
◆	Denmark	↑	↑	↑		↑			↑	↑	↔	↔		
♦	Ecuador	↓	↓	↑			↔	↔	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	
◆	Finland	↑	↑	?	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↔	↔	↑	↑
◆	Germany	↑	↑	↑	↔	↔	↑		↔	↑	↔	↔	1/	↑
	Guinea	?	?	?				↓			↓	↓		↓
NA	Hungary													
♦	Iceland	↑	↓	↓	↔	↑	↑		?	↑	↔	↔	↔	↑
◆	Mexico	↑	↑	↓		↔	↔		↔	↑	↔	↔	?	↔
♦	Morocco	↑	↑	↑		↔	↑	↓	↓	↑	↓	↓	↑	↓
◆	Netherlands	↑	↑	↑	↔	↑	↑	↑	↔	↑	↑	↔	1/	↑
♦	Norway	↑	↑	↓	↔	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↔	↔	↑	↑
◆	Peru	↑	↑	↓		↑	↔	↔	↔	↑	↓	↔	↔	↑
◆	Slovenia	↓	↓	↓	↔	↓	↓	↓	↓	?	↓	↓	↔	↔
♦	Sweden	↑	↑	↓		↑	↔	↑	↔	↑	↑	↔	1/	↑
NA	Switzerland	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	↑	↑	NA	NA
	Tunisia 2/													
◆	Turkey	↑	↓	↓		↔	↓	↔	↔	?	↔	↔	↓	?
NA	Uganda	NA												
♦	Ukraine	↑	↓	↓	↔	↔	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↔	↔
♦	United Kingdom	↑	↑	↑	↑	↔	↑		↔	↑	↑	↔		↑
♦	United States	↑		↑	↔	↑	↑	↔	↔	↑	↑	↔	↑	↔
♦	Venezuela	↓	↓	↓		↓	↓	↓	↓	↔	↓	↓	↔	↔
◆	E. Community 3/	↑	↑	↑	↔						↑	↔	↔	

1/ National fisheries policy is managed under EU's Common Fisheries Policy.
2/ Reports on cross-sectoral chapters only
3/ EC activities cannot be accurately reflected in this matrix. These activities often consist of directives, strategies and pilot projects funded by EC. The actual implementation takes place at the national level. EC generally strongly supports the Agenda 21 implementation process and other international agreements.